

voyage of the Chevert, described and figured under the name of *Monacanthus Cheverti*, a fish which we believed to have been up to that time undescribed. We mentioned at the time that, with the exception of there being no trace of the third dorsal spine—the chief distinguishing feature of the genus *Balistes*—the Fish seemed to be identical with *Balistes aculeatus*, Linn. It turns out that the absence of the spine in our specimen must have been the result of accident, as a few days ago Mr. Masters pointed out to me specimens of the same Fish from the Endeavour River, in which the third spine was distinctly visible. The proper name of the fish is therefore *Balistes aculeatus*, and *Monacanthus Cheverti* must sink into a synonym.

Some further remarks on POËPHILA *Gouldiæ* and POËPHILA
MIRABILIS (*Homb. et Jacq*)

By E. P. RAMSAY, F.L.S., &c., Curator of the Australian Museum,
Sydney.

In my last note on this species (P.L.S. of N.S.W., vol. I, pt. iii, p. 281), I mentioned that, on account of the *black-headed* (*P. gouldiæ*) and the *crimson-headed* birds (*P. mirabilis*) having been found breeding together, I was wont to consider the *former*, *females* of the latter, and that both were of the same species. Further investigations, however, have caused me to modify my views on this subject, and to speak with more confidence in the matter. I find now that birds, undoubtedly males, having black heads, have been found breeding with similarly coloured females, and crimson-headed males, with females also crimson-headed, as has been previously pointed out by Mr. Gould.* This, however, does not prove them to be distinct species, as we well know that many birds breed in comparatively speaking immature plumage, and others again take years before they attain the livery of the fully adult birds. This I believe to be the case in the present instance. The young birds of the first year at least, have the plumage dull brown, with an indication of a pectoral band. As they become older, the *head*

*Gould's Handbook, 1 p. 422.

becomes *black*, the *back green*, and the *pectoral band purplish*—or *rosy violet*, becoming deeper in the males, sooner perhaps, than in the females; *both sexes retain this plumage for a considerable time*, and are found breeding in this stage; with age, however, *both sexes attain the crimson heads* so characteristic of the lovely *Poëphila mirabilis*. This fact is shown in a skin of a female I now exhibit, in which the *head is parti-coloured, crimson and black*. There is a narrow black line all round the crimson of the head, and also *round the eye*, and a black patch in front of it, while the sides and crown are chiefly crimson. They are found breeding, often in flocks together, sometimes in large flocks, but frequently, pairs in both stages of plumage are met with by themselves, scattered over a large extent of country. They have a considerable range, being found as far south as 100 miles due west of Port Denison, which I consider to be their most southern limit.

I am indebted to Inspector Armit for much interesting information on the habits of these beautiful finches, and other rare birds in Northern Queensland, also for the loan of the specimens I exhibit this evening.

Since writing the above, I have received from Mr. Armit a specimen of this species in a very interesting stage of plumage. The head is black, as in that stage, which may be distinguished under the name of *gouldiæ*, but the *feathers of the crown and sides of the face* to behind the eyes, are tipped with *bright golden yellow*, while their basal portion is light brown or whitish; a narrow bluish band bounds the black of the throat and head; the remainder of the upper surface green. except the upper tail coverts, which are bluish, with some of the younger feathers green, margined at the tips with white; the two centre tail feathers are elongated and pointed, the breast is light buff washed with pale violet purple, the flanks and abdomen pale yellow, the under tail coverts white; the bill is light horn colour at the base, becoming blackish at the tip.

Total length, 4 inches; wing, 2·4 inches; tail, 1·5 inches; tarsi, 0·5 inch; bill, 0·45 inch.

This cannot be considered a distinct species until a good series of skins be obtained, proving this phase of plumage to be constant. We sadly want a carefully collected and large series of all these forms, with the sexes carefully determined by discretion, and until this be obtained we shall not be able to arrive at any definite conclusion respecting them. It would appear that this golden headed phase is intermediate between the brown and black headed birds, and I have also before me a *crimson* headed bird in change from the *black*. If this *golden headed* bird were not decidedly a young individual one might be induced to describe it as a new species, showing parallel phases of plumage with *P. mirabilis*, and in the adult acquiring a *golden* instead of a *crimson* head. Those ornithologists, therefore, who take this view of the question may distinguish the *golden headed* forms by the name of *P. armitiana*, in the same way that some good ornithologists, considering the black headed birds to be a distinct species, distinguish them under the name of *Poëphila gouldiæ*.

Description of a supposed *new species* of *Acanthophis*, from North Australia.

By E. P. RAMSAY, F.L.S., &c.

ACANTHOPHIS PRAELONGUS. SP. NOV.

Scales in 21 rows; abdominal plates, about 120; anal, 1; subcaudals, *undivided*, 26 *divided*, 24-24. Head, elongate, about three times as long as broad; distance between the eye and snout equal to interorbital space; superciliaries rough, ridged, much elevated, and extended over the eye; eye, large; *pupil*, *round*; plates of the head slightly rugose; the body elongate, scales on the back keeled in about 10 rows, the keels becoming less developed towards the tail; tail, a little over a fifth of the total length. The *nasal orifices* large, *placed a little behind the middle of a large plate*.* General colour of the upper surface, dark ashy brown, darker on the head and tail, the neck, body,

*In Mr. Krefft's work on the Snakes of Australia, I find it stated (p. 79) that, in the genus *Acanthophis* the "nostrils" are "between two shields." This is a mistake, as in none of the numerous examples I have examined of any species of this genus are they so placed. The subcaudals are moreover two-rowed in nearly half of their number.